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suggesting that as the first wife was not strong they should send her uterine sister as a little 'follower' to help her. Finding that her son was agreeable she reported the matter to his eldest half-brother, head of the homestead, who discussed the matter with his brothers.

The ultimate guarantor of the interests and economic independence of the 'house' is the cattle-linked sister with whose bride-price the wife was obtained. As we have seen, she occupies a very special position in the 'house' built by her cattle. Even before her brother's bridal party arrives at his homestead with the new bride she is taken to his married sister's homestead where a goat is slaughtered for her in recognition of their special relationship. When the sister visits her old home she will 'put down her things' and make herself at home in the hut of this wife of her brother. She is the first to be called to beer there; she must be invited to all activities such as work-parties held by the 'house'; all sickness is reported to her; she is called in to discuss the marriage of all sons and daughters of that 'house'. She or her eldest uterine sister is the one who magically protects a new homestead by drawing a medicated branch in a magical circle around it. If her father and mother are dead she sees to it that her brother treats his wife properly. He cannot chase her away or divorce her unless his sister believes his action to be justifiable; and she may, and very often does, take her brother's wife to live with her in her husband's village if he ill-treats her. She has an interest in this 'house' for here her son will find a wife. When her brother dies it is she and her sisters who will distribute the inheritance. The sanction for her control is a religious one: if she is 'dissatisfied in her heart' this may 'stir up the ancestors' and cause a child of her brother to be ill—a very powerful weapon.

Development of a House

Let us consider the growth and development of a house for it is only by a very gradual process that a house reaches full stature. The marriage of every woman marks the birth of a new unit which may become in time an independent homestead though it does not always do so. This is possible at the earliest only when the eldest son has married a wife and

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given to the son of deceased's youngest wife who had deserted him; two goats were killed for the widow of the deceased's eldest son by his first wife when she came from Johannesburg to pay a visit of condolence. Deceased's field was a *lusiwe*, a site of their previous village, and as is the custom with such a field, was divided between his wives. His mealies were equally divided between all his wives, his own daughters who were present at the ceremony also receiving some. In the case of Mathekha, all his cattle were given by the *khadi* (his sister) to his eldest son by his chief wife, a man who was a prominent councillor of the queen. It was understood they would be used for helping his brothers and half-brothers to marry. The old man's blankets and money were divided among all his children, the elder ones receiving £1 10s. 0d., the smaller ones only 10s.

The wives of a deceased man if they are still of childbearing age are allocated to his brothers or, in the case of a very young wife, sometimes to the chief son and heir. It is his responsibility to hold the family together after the death of his father. The division of the property is made on the day of purification from mourning (*khitshila*) about a year after the death when all the relatives have gathered together. The person responsible for the division of the inheritance in property and wives is the eldest uterine sister of the deceased who acts in consultation with her sisters, especially the cattle-linked sister of the deceased. If there is no uterine sister the deceased's eldest daughter takes her place. She will act in consultation with her father's brother if one is still alive. In allocating wives some consideration is generally given to the wishes of the parties concerned.

When the heir is a minor, a brother of the deceased, usually the one who inherits the mother of the heir, may be chosen to act as regent. But he must be careful to act only in consultation with the *khadi*. In many instances in the case of the death of a district head when the *khadi* (sister of deceased) is old or a widow and free to leave her husband's homestead she may herself come to rule in her brother's village. When M. died, the son of his chief wife was still a child so his uterine sister, a widow, came to rule, while the younger half-brother of the deceased returned from another area where he had been living to set up his village near by in order to raise seed to his half-brother by the chief wife and help his half-sister by conducting

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the court cases. Later, when the heir came of age, a new homestead was built. When Mabulana died in the 1940's his daughter, a married woman who does not live in the area was made official district head. Her mother's brother came specially from the Capital to live in the area and help her by conducting cases.

The mother's brother is considered to be eminently suitable as adviser to a ruler. The queen, too, traditionally has a mother's brother as chief councillor. A mother's brother has no claim to succession yet is deeply interested in the welfare of his sister's child. He will see to it that the sister's child gets his rights. The position of the son of the *khadi* who is acting as regent is somewhat different. There is a Lobedu proverb saying '*Bya thaga monye bo dula mudukulu*—where a master is lacking there sits the nephew'. And it is true that the son of a woman regent is often ruler in all but name. In the 1930's there were two blatant cases in which the rightful heirs of district heads who had long reached man's estate seemed in danger of permanently being ousted. In both cases in the long run when the *khadi* died the rightful heir was installed, in one of the cases on the expressed dying wish of the *khadi*. Right seems to prevail in the long run.

The Homestead Through Time

Basically a homestead consists of a group of 'houses' belonging to the wives of the head or of the head and his half-brothers. Other relatives may attach themselves to it but the core remains the group of agnates.

Many of the smaller homesteads that have all the appearance of being independent are found upon investigation to be portions (a 'house') of a neighbouring homestead, which has become separated in space but still considers itself part and acknowledges the authority and control of the senior homestead near by. The most obvious case of this arises where, owing to quarrels between co-wives, a husband has placed one of the wives in a homestead of her own and visits her there. If a wife has a married son then in the event of serious quarrels there is more likely to be a hiving off, the son moving to a different area with his mother and siblings.

In Figure 5 a very small homestead is shown. Here the